

PARANOID TIMES

VOLUME ONE, NUMBER FOUR

WINTER 2021

FREE



CONTENTS

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Editor's Intro | 11. Wuhan Oriental ad |
| 2. Pangolin Pandemic | 12. Mr. Pangolin Gets His Revenge |
| 3. (Continued) | 13. Pangolins Playing Poker |
| 4. (Continued) | A Dangerous Pet? |
| 5. (Continued) | 14. Cosmic Egg |
| Covid Bill | 15. Pangolin Apocalypse* |
| 6. Virus-Free | 16. Pangolin Victory* |
| 7. It's a Dog's Life | 17. Pangolin Paradise* |
| 8. PM Quashes Rumour | 18. Welcome to China |
| 9. Gamma Vision | No Escape |
| 10. Royal Mutations | 19. Pangolins in the Sun |

* AKA The Pangolin Triptych



VOLUME ONE, NUMBER FOUR

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'The lunatics have taken over the asylum'—*Fun Boy Three*

EDITOR'S

INTRO

Help, the world is being overrun by pangolins. They are getting everywhere. Ever since they escaped from the wet markets in China they have been running amok, causing mayhem, disrupting our daily lives and generally being a nuisance. But even worse, due to Covid infection (believed to have come from these creatures) some people are even beginning to look like them. You cannot be serious, we hear you cry. Then take a look at the following pages for examples. And a majority of pangolins are now getting their revenge for their mistreatment and abuse by illicit traders, poachers, restaurateurs, charlatans, mountebanks, pseudo-scientists, etc., and are even planning World War Three against us humans in general. The pangolin apocalypse is literally round the corner. Phew!

Don't worry. Just kidding.

We thought we would have a bit of fun with this issue. Seriously, we do not blame the pangolins, or bats, or whatever else it was that caused the pandemic. If anything it is down to us and our behaviour in/attitude towards the beautiful world in which we live. This has been fully explained in the article entitled 'Pangolin Pandemic' so we should not be blaming these poor defenceless creatures who will soon become extinct if we carry on the way we are.

The good doctor has taken a leave of absence from this issue, but he will be back for the next one. So we have concentrated again on imagery rather than words. Pictures speak louder than words and have more impact. If you don't like them or don't agree then send in your own contribution and we will take it up with the management. But it is worth considering, as we write up this short intro, where we are at present. It has now officially been a year since the pandemic started and looks like it is going to continue for a good few months before we see any sign of abatement, perhaps by summer when things may get back to normal. We have hit a milestone in this country by being the first to report the dreaded number of 100,000 deaths (and rising) due to Covid. This is entirely down to the Government and their failure to respond properly to the crisis. By contrast, Taiwan, which is just off the coast of China, has had only 7 deaths related to Covid. Why? Because they were prepared to begin with and closed borders immediately, although never having to go into a full lockdown. Why couldn't we have done the same? Guernsey, which is not far from us, never went into a lockdown and has reported no deaths, because it too was prepared in advance and closed borders. Now we are faced with a new strain of Covid, a variant identified as coming from South Africa, the same place as the pangolins which were believed to be carrying the virus when they arrived in China. How will the Government cope this time round? Will they mess it up again? Probably, as it is the most inept one we have come across so far.

The Editor
Winter 2021

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Pangolin Pandemic

The Editor

We have all been affected by the pandemic. That is why it is called a pandemic, a global phenomenon which has quickly spread to affect the whole world. From one isolated outbreak it has become the biggest threat to mankind, making other global issues like climate change, economic crises, Australian bush fires, etc., pale in comparison. The news each day seems to neglect these other issues putting the pandemic at the forefront of everything and how we are desperately trying to survive it. But make no mistake. It is nothing new since we have experienced virus outbreaks before: the only difference being this time round is the rapidity of its transmissibility and its high mortality rate. The cause: our own human behaviour. We are the cause. We are responsible, not the animals who are believed to be the carriers of the virus, but us, as will be demonstrated. Pandemic experts warned us this will arise from environmental degradation. Rachel Carson, a 20th century conservationist, once argued, "A war on nature is ultimately a war against ourselves."

Humankind is destroying natural environments at an alarming rate. And it is getting worse each year. If we go back forty years, between 1980 and 2000 more than 100 million hectares of tropical forest were felled and more than 85% of wetlands were destroyed. We put human populations first, above all else, and are wiping out natural habitats of the animals who live there. This brings us closer in contact with new pathogens. The diseases which are carried by wild animals, usually restricted to their own environments, are now being passed to us.

Pangolins, monkeys, all types of reptiles, bats, etc., when captured are being forced together in close proximity. The trade in these rare animals feeds the markets which in turn lead to the contamination of urban centres by new maladies. It is in this situation where viral pandemics begin. It is a nightmare come true. Environmentalists and activists forewarned us about this a long time ago. This was no accident waiting to happen. It was going to happen since nobody was listening to them.

It all began in the wildlife markets (also called wet markets) in China where various livestock are kept and sold, but not domestic animals: these are rare and exotic breeds that have been trafficked for years and are now nearly on the point of extinction. These wet markets can be found all over China and South East Asia, catering for all tastes, as exotic meats, but also crucially as medicines and remedies, or rather naive pharmacopoeia as there is no scientific basis whatsoever that they actually work. It was fate and inevitability which happened to start in one place. The link between the pandemic and the wildlife trade was not apparent at first, but can be traced back to its origins in these wet markets.

For example, the epidemic of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) rose out of the proximity between bats, carnivores and human consumers. As far back as 2007 it was stated in a scientific article: "The presence of a large reservoir of SARS-CoV-like viruses in horseshoe bats, together with the culture of eating exotic mammals in southern China, is a time bomb." This time bomb exploded at the end of 2019.

Our desire to consume exotic animals by importing and exporting them out of their natural environments has two fundamental consequences. The first is that it increases the risk of epidemics by putting us in contact with rare infectious viruses that they are carrying. Although most of these viruses are only species-confined and cannot defeat our own immune systems by penetrating and using our cells, the trafficking and confinement of diverse wild animals in the same place allows for infectious agents to recombine, thus enabling them to cross the species threshold. Most diseases come from animals. In fact more than two-thirds of emerging diseases are zoonoses, i.e. infectious agents that can pass between wild animals and humans.

The second consequence is the capturing and selling of exotic animals puts enormous pressure on wild populations. A recent example is the pangolin which is found in Africa and Asia. It is poached for its meat and scales, despite being under a protected status. Approximately 20 tonnes of meat is seized every year by customs. This would suggest in reality at least around 200,000 are killed each year for this demand. (See end note for more details.)

This trafficking is driven by underground opportunists and enablers, the people in the middle, who supply to this demand. Most belong to criminal organisations, not only trafficking in wild animals but also people, and from the proceeds the money is laundered, then filtered through wider networks, possibly used to buy guns, ammunition, etc. and other highly illegal activities. They are sophisticated



criminals who survive by the exploitation of others. Yet this trade is now having profound ramifications demonstrating that we cannot force nature: if we do, it will get back at us. We are now paying the price for this global illegal activity. Destroying the fragile biodiversity which provides natural services from which we benefit results in zoonotic diseases. These diseases are normally bound only to exotic animals but by moving them out of their natural environments we also bring their diseases with them.

Coronaviruses were already near the top of the watch list of dangerous diseases that might come out of animals and cause the next human pandemic. On January 30th 2020 it was announced by the World Health Organisation that the crisis in China was not yet global, when it was already known by several scientists who had been studying the phenomenon the year before. So it was expected and thus could have been curtailed right from the start.

Covid-19 is not new but has existed in various forms, or earlier stages, and was allowed to become one of the most successful viruses on the planet, as demonstrated by its ability to spread everywhere through human agency. Viruses do not have intentions, or can have attributed to them any form of morality (for example, calling them evil is nonsensical as that term cannot apply here). They simply respond to opportunities, and if we give them opportunities to thrive they will do so. By spreading into humans they are given a bigger opportunity to spread further since we travel from country to country. It is here when they are at their peak performance thanks to us for giving them a golden opportunity for success.

This has been happening with increasing frequency over the last few decades, especially since the 1960s, where we have seen previous viruses thrive, like the Ebola virus in Africa, the HIV of the 1980s, the Hantavirus in the US (which was spread by infected mice), the SARS virus of 2003, the bird flu of 2008, and 2014 the Zika virus. It is an endless chain which will continue as long as we come into contact with wild animals. It is part of a pattern, nothing new, but a spill over which has resulted in the latest pandemic. The same happened with the West Nile virus (a leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the continental United States spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito) and was due to our interaction with animals. It preceded Covid-19 by at least a decade when it was first discovered in North America in 1999. The New York strain was linked to that from Israel identified the previous year. If a virus starts in one animal but gets passed into another animal due to close proximity (as in wet markets) then the virus will replicate abundantly in that animal and then pass to humans. The animal, in this instance, is called an amplifier host, for it amplifies in that animal.

Nature is not the enemy, neither should we lay blame on any animal. It is us, or rather our human behaviour, which has pushed the balance of the ecosystem by the crowding of different species of animals in situations like wet markets, putting us into contact with them.



It is this that has brought the pandemic on us, also by destroying animal habitats through things like deforestation. In South East Asia there was extensive clearing and farming for pigs. The pig farms just happened to be where fruit-bats were nesting, roosting in the trees over the pigpens. Bat droppings fell to the ground and were then eaten by the pigs which became sick. It is significant that it did not affect the bats, but it did affect the pigs. Consequently the people who ate the pigs also became sick.

So here we have a virus that jumps from bats to pigs then to humans, in the same way as Covid. This would not have happened if we did not take their natural environment from them and encroach on their space. As the human population increases, this activity is going to continue because we will be invading more and more of their space, and in most cases forcing the animals to either flee or come into closer contact with us. We see this happening all over the world. In the arctic polar bears are being forced into towns as each year the polar ice caps melt further, leaving them less space to move. They have now become a menace in parts of Alaska, through no fault of their own.

Bats are also implied in the current pandemic. They have been studied by virologists who concluded the virus probably came directly from bats as it had the same genetic make up found in these mammals. Yet the virus may have been passed to us through an intermediate host (or amplifier). However, after the outbreak was first discovered in the markets in Wuhan, in central China's Hubei Province, a city of 11 million people, the animals sold there were cleared and so scientists were unable to conclude the case. Covid-19 is the human disease caused by this SARS coronavirus. By isolating and studying the animal species responsible we can reduce the risk of further infections. The present working hypothesis is there exists a virus that comes from the bat. This in turn infects the pangolin which is then passed on to humans. There are eight species of pangolins, but it is more than probable that the species infecting people in China come from South Africa. It is from there that pangolins are caught and transported to

the markets (see map on p.2). The genetic sequence is so close that it is almost identical, at least 99% similar, or close enough, hence we can say it is the same virus. Although this is not conclusive, scientists have not ruled out pangolins as being the main cause, but are still looking at other animals.

Even months before the outbreak scientists discovered that pangolins carried coronaviruses. It is for this reason it has become the prime suspect as pangolins with the virus showed similar symptoms found in humans.

In early 2019 Chinese authorities intercepted a Malayan pangolin smuggling operation. Twenty one of the creatures were seized and taken to a wildlife sanctuary in southern China. They were found to be carrying a disease and their condition soon deteriorated. When researchers arrived most had already died, and only four were left. They exhibited symptoms normally found in humans, the same as when we have colds, like runny noses and were wheezing and coughing, the sort associated with the upper respiratory tract symptoms, although this may be attributed to the way they are trafficked, usually in tight and cramped conditions with little in the way of fresh air and decent food. It is then that the virus comes to the fore and spills over into the human population when people come into contact with the pangolins.

Despite the best efforts of the researchers all of the Malayan pangolins died; each one was found to have a Coronavirus, yet dissimilar from the new pandemic. However this does not mean this virus has nothing to do with our virus, or others found in pangolins from elsewhere. It is also significant in that viruses are constantly changing, so the one found in the Malayan pangolin may differ widely from those found in other parts of the world.

Pangolin scales, made of the same substance found in human hair and finger nails, are useless for medicine, but this has not stopped them being imported into China and still being used as remedies today. Many thousands of poor pangolins are trafficked each year and find their way to South East Asia where they are slaughtered and killed for either meat or

medicine. The outcome for this extensive trafficking—similar to ivory hunting of elephants in Africa—is that one day they will inevitably disappear altogether, becoming extinct due to human greed. Even if we cannot lay the blame on pangolins, this unfortunate animal has become a symbol, like rats accused of causing the Plague, and have been widely blamed for their part in the pandemic. It has now become one of the most smuggled animals in the world and extremely endangered. If this trade continues all species will be extinct. Not only that, but as we increase our numbers we are slowly eradicating its natural habitats by cutting down trees, destroying forests, etc. The destruction of wild ecosystems also has the effect of forcing the viruses to infect human habited areas, thus causing us more harm, either by swallowing them or breathing them in. By taking them into our systems they are no longer animal viruses but become human viruses which we pass on to others.

The fact that we as humans need to eat has also brought about this situation. Hunger drives the market, not just for ordinary food, but also for the exotic. And since there are more of us means more mouths to feed, requiring more land to use for things like agriculture and the domestication of animals for food. We all share the responsibility. What we do here and now determines what happens in other parts of the world. Consumption of products drives the markets which in turns drives the expansion of consumerism into other areas. What we eat, what we buy, etc., determines the outcome for we ultimately force viruses that live naturally in wild animals closer to us. It is foolish for us to now think we can have unlimited economic development without repercussions, or an infinite number of people on a planet that has only finite number of resources, when the human population is continually growing: it makes little sense. It is not just simply a matter of closing down all the wet markets that supply pangolins and other wild animals; the people who make a living from this trade will be forced into other activities which could also have the same resultant factor since they still need to earn money to buy food, etc., so alleviating poverty all round may be the way forward, and also lessening our demand for these products, curbing our greed, etc., now will have a beneficial effect all over. By stopping the demand for pangolins we alleviate not only their suffering but also restore the balance.

At present there are around 7.2 billion people on this planet. Natural resources are already running short, in most cases faster than nature can replace them, but by 2050 it is said there will be an estimated 9.7 billion people. How will Earth cope if there is not enough space and resources to cater for that amount?

Also, it is no surprise the outbreak occurred in Asia. It is one of the most densely populated areas on the planet. Over 60 percent of humans can be found there. Rapid urbanisation has pushed the boundaries of the domesticated areas. Since the beginning of this century almost 200 million people moved to urban areas in East Asia, enough to form the eighth most populous country in the world. Precious forest land has to be destroyed to create residential areas to

accommodate all these people. Wild animals are then forced to move closer to cities and towns and will inevitably encounter domestic animals and also the human population. More people lead to more deforestation. Human expansion causes the loss of wild habitats, ultimately killing predators, for example those that feed off rodents. With them gone, or sharply diminished, the rodent population explodes. Studies in Asia have recently shown this increases the risk of zoonotic disease. Tropical regions, which are rich in host biodiversity, hold large pools of pathogens, thus greatly increasing the chance of a novel pathogen emerging. Farming systems like those found throughout Africa and Asia do not help. In those regions families depend on subsistence farming with a minuscule supply of livestock. Disease control, feed supplementation, and housing for their animals is extremely limited due to lack of space. Cattle, chickens, pigs, etc., animals which are bred for food and food products, carry endemic diseases, and are often in close contact with each other, mixing with variety of non-domestic animals, and hence infecting humans. Crowded conditions in wildlife markets, along with the intimate mixing of multiple species, is how killer pathogens emerge, spreading between species.

Covid-19 is just the latest infectious disease arising from our collision with nature. It causes a respiratory illness (like SARS), not helped by exposure to air pollution, increasing our vulnerability, as air pollution gets worse globally thanks to carbon emissions and exhaust fumes. Particles of air pollution also act as transport for pathogens, contributing to the spread of viruses and infectious disease across large distances.

Biodiversity conservation is now paramount if we are to stop further pandemics. This will also help to stabilise the climate.

The precious ecosystems need to be protected, and the animals that inhabit them. In the future there will be more pandemics because we are indirectly causing them. The problems we are now facing can only get worse. By destroying habitats and ecosystems, diminishing the space for animals to thrive, and diminishing what they live on, is all setting into motion consequences which we may not be able to overcome.

Millions of people die every year from diseases, parasites or bacteria, and this normally goes unrecognised. The difference we have here is that it not just affecting certain parts of the world but it is global, not an epidemic but a pandemic, affecting all of us. There are also the economic repercussions to consider as well. The economic cost of any pandemic is huge in the long run. SARS in 2003 had an economic impact of around 44 billion USD. Ebola in West Africa in 2013-16 cost us around 53 billion USD. AIDS cost us 563 billion USD. We lose 573 billion USD to flu every year, not taking into consideration lives actually lost. At its present rate the pandemic is likely to far exceed those figures, costing hundreds of billions. The closure of shops, restaurants, bars, etc., is just the outward sign of an economic drift, a gulf that is getting wider and wider the longer this pandemic continues.

Along with government support in this country, the furlough scheme, the mass of workers being laid off and now receiving financial support, the ordering and supplying of vaccines to combat the virus, etc., all this has to be taken into account. But ecology has to come before economy otherwise nothing will change. You can only have an economy where there is a healthy ecology. If we could view the world differently, as the Greeks used to, as a world that is one, then the health of the world is the same as the health of us. You cannot have one without the other for it will only spell dire consequences. We need to survey pandemics, or their emergence, on a wider scale, constantly monitoring what is happening in all natural environments. We have to invest in not only our human health but also the health of the planet.

We cannot have one country denying another country of information. It should be shared freely across all borders. Last year if the Chinese authorities had alerted everyone to the problem of the Coronavirus right at the start then the possibility of reducing the overall cost and number of fatalities could have been met if not averted. There must be freedom of information in a global society without the withholding of that information.

We need to share and cooperate with each other otherwise it will not only be the end of



WHO ATE ALL
THE PANGOLINS?



the endangered species, like the pangolins, but also, ultimately, us. We need to resolve the problems like biodiversity, climate change, global warming, through a joint effort. After the SARS outbreak in 2003 prohibitions were lifted and things went back to normal as if nothing had happened, including the trading of wild life in the wet markets. Quite clearly, in hindsight, this was a mistake. Protection of endangered species, biodiversity conservation, much stricter controls over deforestation, etc., is a step in the right direction. The outright banning of sales of endangered species needs to be legislated swiftly. Pangolins are now a protected species, with many now being kept in secret wildlife sanctuaries; however they are still being used in traditional medicine in farms, but under tighter control, with the observance of stringent measures, mostly for scientific research. China is already changing its laws regarding this and will soon ban the selling and consumption of wild animals by monitoring the wet markets and may even shut them down for ever. The problem is, China is a big country and without proper effort it will be hard to monitor every where the markets can be found and control them altogether. This current pandemic should be a wake up call to all of us and make us realise what we are all doing to our planet. The interconnectedness of every part of the planet and the ecosystem as a whole should be acknowledged. But being human as we are, after this pandemic things will probably go back to normal and the lessons which have been learned from previous pandemics will again be

forgotten. The next pandemic can thus only be far worse. We need to be more bio-centric and adapt to the changing circumstances. We need to fundamentally change the rate in which we are increasing our numbers, and our innate consumption, so we do not outgrow this planet. Although countries now have in their possession some vaccines for defeating the virus, the only vaccine programme we believe in is total human sterilisation, at least for one generation, with everyone being eligible, regardless of race or creed, until everything is stabilised. Only in this way will we get the numbers down and avert the catastrophes to come. If we don't, the repercussions will be even more severe, and our plight at present will be as nothing compared to what we will be forced to suffer in the future.

A Note on the Above

In the past 20 years nearly 900,000 pangolins were trafficked across Southeast Asia. It looks increasingly like Covid was passed to us from pangolins due to this activity. Conservationists have been calling for a global ban on wildlife trading, including the illicit poaching and trading of this creature.

Pangolins are native to Asia and Africa and are the most widely trafficked mammal in the world. All eight species are now categorised as "vulnerable," "endangered" or even "critically endangered," (Red List of Endangered Species).

Four species are largely concentrated in Indonesia. The others in Africa. All of them are threatened by the false belief that their scales can heal a multitude of diseases. Singapore last

year seized a world record 25.6 tonnes of scales in just five days. The scales were in containers on their way to Vietnam from Nigeria. The previous record seizure of scales was in Shenzhen, China, in 2017 (11.9 tonnes). It is estimated they came from 38,000 pangolins, (worth around \$76.5 million). Each one was killed to feed a demand, based on bogus claims.

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, say 20 tonnes are being trafficked every year, yet there is relatively little data on global population of actual numbers of pangolins.

Last year Malaysia had 29.8 tonnes of pangolin products seized. TRAFFIC also noted over 96,000 kilograms of scales were seized there, and in Singapore and Vietnam from 2017 to 2019.

Sunda pangolins in Indonesia are at risk of extinction because of an illicit trade that sees thousands of the critically endangered animals trafficked each year. 10,000 pangolins are lost each year to illegal trade despite enforcement.

TRAFFIC also identified Sumatra as a hotspot for the trade which serves as a key link to smugglers in Malaysia and Singapore. Animals are most often sent on to China and Vietnam.

TRAFFIC suggested "inducing behaviour change in consumption countries, so that the demand for pangolin products can be decreased."

In the wake of the Covid pandemic many have urged for the total ban of wildlife trading. A recent study by American-based researchers revealed new diseases like Covid will become more common as human activity destroys habitats and forces disease-carrying wild animals into ever-closer proximity with humans.

COVID BILL



HM Government

From: The Chancellor
11 Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2AA

Date: 01/02/2021
Issue Number: 0104110
Priority: Urgent
Status: Active

To: Mr Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
And the People of China

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of Her Majesty's Government, please find below our bill to you for expenses incurred during the current pandemic. This amount is correct up to 31/01/2021 and is based on all the data provided by the following sources: NHS, HMRC, ONS, NAO, and other regulatory bodies. Obviously we cannot put a price on the cost of human lives, and therefore can only charge you for charges relating to the victims' care and welfare by staff at hospitals and/or nursing homes, from the start of their diagnosis and positive Covid test, to their stay in said institutions, and up to their time of death. Each life is based on an approximate value, which was correct as of the date of this bill. Also, please note additional charge (more correctly a fixed penalty) for non-disclosure of information which could have prevented the tragedy in the first place.

You have thirty days for full remittance upon receipt of this bill. All monies owed should be paid by BACS payment directly to our account, as below:

Bank: HSBC
Sort code: 44-74-92
Account number: 4044 9823 2044

Your co-operation in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

R. Sunak

ITEMISED BILL

Healthcare (per each individual x £1000.00 per day x number of days averaged out):* 103,450 x £1000 x 44	£4,551,800,000
Total Vaccination Programme:**	£11,700,000,000
Fixed Penalty:***	£750,000,000
Subtotal	£17,001,800,000
+ VAT at 20%	£3,400,360,000
Total	= £20,402,160,000

* This is based on only those patients who tested positive for Covid within 28 days prior to their deaths.

** This is based on total rollout of vaccinations across the whole of the UK.

*** This does not include interest.

Note: This does not take into account fiscal losses such as redundancy, financial support, crimes caused by Covid (theft, domestic abuse, vandalism, fraud, etc.).





THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO
TRUTH IN THE RUMOUR THAT
COVID INFECTION IS TURNING
ALL OF US INTO PANGOLINS

**STAY
ALERT** ▶ **CONTROL
THE VIRUS** ▶ **SAVE
LIVES**

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MR. PANGOLIN GETS HIS REVENGE







IN AN ANCIENT CREATION MYTH ATTRIBUTED TO THE XHOSA, WHEN THE WORLD WAS FIRST CREATED IT WAS BORNE UPON THE BACK OF A PANGOLIN WHICH WAS GOLD IN COLOUR AND HAD BRIGHT EMERALDS FOR EYES. AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS THE WORLD BECAME HEAVIER AS MORE PEOPLE CAME INTO IT, TOO HEAVY FOR THE PANGOLIN TO BEAR. THE WEIGHT BROKE ITS BACK, HENCE ALL PANGOLINS NOW WALK AROUND WITH ARCHED BACKS.

PANGOLIN APOCALYPSE



PANGOLIN VICTORY



PANGIOLIN PARADISE

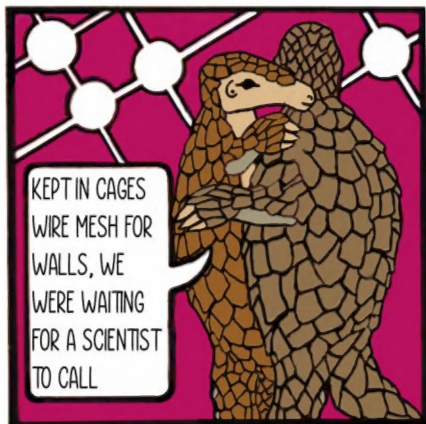




NEXT ISSUE: SPRING 2021
CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

**YOU'VE READ THIS,
NOW WASH YOUR HANDS.**

PANGOLINS BEHAVIOUR IN THE SUN



**NEVER A DULL MOMENT WITH
PANGOLINS AROUND**